

We claim:

1. A wet-laid nonwoven fibrous web material wherein the dominant fiber component is unpulped long natural fiber bundles.

2. The nonwoven web material of claim 1 wherein the natural fiber bundles are cordage fibers.

3. The nonwoven web material of claim 1 wherein the natural fiber bundles are selected from the group consisting of sisal, abaca, henequen, kenaf and jute.

4. The nonwoven web material of claim 1 wherein the long natural fibers have a chopped fiber length in the range of about 10 - 50 mm.

5. The nonwoven web material of claim 1 wherein the web includes a pulp fiber component.

6. The nonwoven web material of claim 1 ^{comprising} wherein includes a synthetic fiber component.

7. The nonwoven web material of claim 6 wherein the synthetic fiber component is selected from the group consisting of ^{and} cellulose acetate, viscose rayon, nylon or polyolefin fibers.

8. The nonwoven web material of claim 1 wherein the web has a basis weight up to about 200 g/m².

9. The nonwoven web material of claim 1 wherein the web has a basis weight of at least about 100 g/m².

10. The nonwoven web material of claim 1 wherein the unpulped fibers have a modulus of elasticity in the range of about 2 - 5 x 10⁶ psi.

11. A composite multilayer sheet material comprising the nonwoven web of claim 1 and a pulp web secured thereto.

12. The composite sheet material of claim 11 wherein the layers are secured by hydroentanglement.

13. The composite sheet material of claim 11 wherein the layers are secured by chemical bonding.

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~~14~~. The composite sheet material of claim ~~11~~¹⁰ including a spunbonded web on the opposite side of the nonwoven from the pulp web.

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~~15~~. The composite sheet material of claim ~~14~~¹³ wherein the composite is thermoformable under pressure.

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~~16~~. The composite sheet material of claim ~~11~~¹⁰ including a foam layer with ~~the~~ nonwoven web material of claim 1 secured to opposite sides thereof.

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~~17~~. The composite sheet material of claim ~~11~~¹⁰ having an average deflection force of at least 2.25 lb.

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